

COMICS FEATURE

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A TRIBUTE TO RUSS MANNING



THE LAST INTERVIEW
By Shel Dorf

THE UNPUBLISHED RUSS MANNING
30 Pages of Unpublished Stories

**Plus Talks with Dave Stevens, Bill Stout,
Bill Roteler and Mike Royer**

COMICS FEATURE

RUSS MANNING TRIBUTE

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EDITORIAL

This issue of *Comics Feature* is something a bit out of the ordinary. Since it is the last issue produced only for distribution within the direct market we wanted to do something a bit special. We wanted to do the sort of thing which would be appreciated by the dedicated fans and readers who populate the comic shops but wouldn't be quite appropriate for the wider audience we will be reaching through the supermarkets and convenience stores. This was our last chance to go a little wild and we didn't want to miss the opportunity. But what should we do? What would make a statement to the loyal readers we have had, for these many years, be a little something personal and special between us and them, and perhaps help to set the image for the magazine as well. Then the opportunity came along. We also publish *BRCC*, although that magazine was temporarily gone into hiatus, and the editor of that title Jon Varvatos brought up something that was just too important, too beautiful not to reach a wide and appreciative audience and to be presented in the best light possible. And so we decided to run it in *Comics Feature* which would be produced with the assistance of *BRCC* and actually and physically owe its existence to the efforts of Mr. Van Hise, an able job indeed. To further enhance the beauty of the issue we have published the issue on white paper. It may cost just marginally more, but it is well worth it.

This issue is both a sad and a happy one at the same time, much as our feelings here at *BRCC* are at the moment. We are a little sad and wistful about leaving the stage of producing fan magazines for a small and understanding group of readers, a group which would be loyal and supportive even if we didn't always produce the most perfect half-tones or eliminate every typo, and entering the stage of producing slick and pretty

packages for that larger audience. We won't let the change alter our enthusiasm or approach to material but somehow things will never be exactly the same again—they will be larger, more beautiful, perhaps even better written—but not the same small closed group. The theme of this book follows that same dichotomy. It is of course sad to lose one of the smart, most talented individuals the industry has ever been graced with. However at the same time there is a joy in looking at the works he left behind, not only the beautifully crafted pages but also the creators whose throes he touched and helped to form. The story pages and the interview pages form one whole. It is just as illuminating and enjoyable to hear Steve Meyers, Bill Stout, Bill Plesner or Mike Roger talk about their experiences with Russ as it is to absorb one of his wonderful Tazman stories—stories never before available to American readers and brought to you with the cooperation of *BRCC*, Inc. who have been gracious enough to understand why we had to see these pages. Sometimes we tend to believe that sometimes we do not have a soul...and sometimes we are right. But that is certainly not true in the case of *BRCC* who proudly bear the name of one of the most gifted storytellers of all time, and demonstrate the spirit that made Edgar Rice Burroughs' stories great.

Next issue we will add 16 pages in full color; we will be available to readers at their supermarkets, convenience stores, newsstands and book stores and everywhere they may care to look; we will have a long and quite delightful talk with John Byrne and begin to add many of the new columns and features that will point the new direction for this magazine. But for now let us slowly and carefully allow the spirit of Russ Manning to fill our minds and our eyes and our hearts....

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AN INTERVIEW WITH : RUSS MANNING

SHEL DORF: It's July 18, 1981...and we're deep in the canyons of Orange County and we're visiting Russ Manning.

Russ, how long have you lived in this idyllic locale?

RUSS MANNING: Well, 1969, two days before Christmas, and two days before Christmas in 1981 will make it twenty-two years.



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SD: Russ, we've talked before and I think we've gone over your early history, but that was while you were still doing Tazman. So let's pick up after that.

SD: When did you leave the

Tazman daily?

RM: May of 1969 because I was doing the *STAR WARS* daily and Sunday at the same time, and the Tazman Sunday, writing and drawing all three features, and any one of those, as you know, is more than one man really should do! Even a sane man would be driven crazy by them, and to do three was absolute foolishness, though I had help. Mike Royer was doing all the inking. I was doing all the writing and all the coloring, but it was just beyond the capabilities of myself, or maybe any mortal human. I just don't know. I don't think anybody should try to do that many comic strip features. It's a killing job.

SD: Well, did your contract with Edgar Rice Burroughs enable you to leave Tazman?

RM: Yeah. It was really no contract. I was hired to do the strip. They're all decent people, both United Features Syndicated and ERB, Inc., are just beautiful

people. They knew I was doing *STAR WARS* so I'd asked their permission to do *STAR WARS* and they wanted me to continue Tazman. I tried and what I couldn't. I worked with Bobbi Miller back at United Features to find someone to take my place.

SD: Who did you find?

RM: Well Mike Royer was suggested and he tried out, but Gil Kane was back there, and Bobbi had a writer back there, and she evidently felt based on that she'd rather go with some local people and took a writer and Gil and went with the strip that way. And then of course Gil ran against the same problem with his strips. Deadlines are just killers.

SD: Wasn't Gil doing *STAR WARS* at the same time?

RM: Yeah. Now there's Gil, you see, who takes on more than one strip. It makes you wonder at people like Mort Walker who must be doing fifteen strips!

CONDUCTED BY SHEL DORF



Base Manning (July 1981)

Photo by Neil East



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SD: Of course Mort Walker doesn't put in all the detail that you put in.

RM: That's true.

SD: I remember your first STAR WARS Sunday page. There were a thousand nuts-and-bolts, computers and robots and it was just an incredible amount of detail. It was extraordinary. Some of your panels are filled with very fine detail and perspective. It's just overwhelming. The eye would have to stay on the page twenty minutes to see everything, so I imagine the ac-

tual doing of it took a long time.

RM: Well credit Mike (Kupper) there, because Mike is just a superb imiter of that kind of technical detail. He trained under Jack Kirby and he just knows how to do that kind of sleek looking mechanical stuff very well.

But you're right, I always felt that the subject sets the style and my style for STAR WARS was more detailed, more mechanical, more sleek than for Tazman. But both of them were very detailed.

SD: I've often wanted to ask

you if it was difficult to change from the backgrounds of doing sub foliage, leaves and trees and vines and plants, to this hand-ware of a space odyssey.

RM: It was in a way. Still, the main thing that was difficult. The background for Tazman, generally, ninety percent of the time, is easy because it's known to us and to the reader. I had tons of research so I could draw a lion, jungle foliage, we all know what it looks like, not because we know what real jungle foliage looks like, but because Hagarth, Foster and everybody have trained us to know what it looks like. Even Roy Crane of "The Sawyer" has taught us what jungle foliage looks like, and if you try to draw it unlike that, it doesn't look like a jungle. Jess Mann drew jungle foliage in his Tazman comic books for fifteen years or so and it did not look like jungle, but it looked like back in Georgia where Jess was from, or Alabama, because he didn't put in the trends and everything the way that Hagarth and everybody who has taught us to see them.



Anyway, Tazman background is easy to draw because our minds are trained. But STAR WARS, except for the movie, has given us no indication whatever, of what the future looks like. What does a telephone look like? What does a lamp post look like? What does the num-

her on the wall look like that tells you where that house is or even what the signs look like, so you have to sit and create it, and not only create it, but create it within the design look that Lucas had established. So it's a lot more difficult. Just a devil of a lot more difficult to do the STAR WARS.

your name as a possibility, too. So we all kind of got you into it.

RM: There were a number of people, eventually Bill Koster, too—I didn't know about Evanier—but there were a couple others that Carol Tideman, who was hiring and firing told

incredible impact on me as a person, seeing that movie, and then such an impact on the nation and everybody else as a whole. I thought, well, maybe this has got enough, even though it's a hell of a drawing job, that it will be able to sustain me. So I was glad to take it and try it. But there wasn't anybody to take Tarnan and I had to keep pulling that through.

SD: How long did you do both of them?

RM: From September of '78 through May of '79. And another thing, Mike was helping me full time, and it required both strips to pay his salary.

SD: But STAR WARS hadn't started appearing yet, and you didn't get paid until it was published, did you?

RM: Oh yes. They started paying me right away. They're perfect people. They're just a great company to work for.

SD: How did the circulation start out on the STAR WARS strip? How many papers did you have? Do you recall?

RM: Not with any true accuracy. If I remember right, Carol said that it was around 150, plenty for them and the syndicate. Everybody was delighted. But it did not hold. I forget what the circumstances were now, oh, I remember now and I don't know whether you will want to report this; you can use it or not at your discretion. The syndicate went out and had their sales people only give one-year contracts. They would not let a newspaper have the strip for less than one year. So one year after the strip started the newspapers re-evaluated and decided whether they wanted to



SD: Gee, Russ, I feel a little bit guilty because we knew the STAR WARS people through the convention, and Carol Tideman called me up and she said, "We're thinking of starting a STAR WARS comic strip, who would you suggest for it?" And I said two people: Noel Sickles or Russ Manning. I said Sickles because I knew he really needed a job at the time, and knew he could do aircraft, dogfights and could draw anything. He's great at his kind of light and shadow. But I also said, "You know Russ did Blagdas, Robot Fighter, and he's just terrific on that kind of science fiction story and I can't think of anyone else who would be more of a natural," and I gave her your phone number as well. But I can't take sole credit because I heard that Mark Evanier was asked and he gave

me about. The thing that was important for me right at that time, Shel, was that I was trying to leave Tarnan. I'd been doing it for twelve years, and I'd really done as much in Tarnan as I could. I'd done as much plotting and character work and this type of thing; different settings, different combinations, and I was really getting kind of Tarnaned-out. I was not only Tarnaned-out, and to show the degree I was actually looking in this area for other work; not even in the art field. I was considering some real estate developing and things of this nature and had even started to do some.

SD: To get away from deadlines.

RM: So when STAR WARS came along it was just such an

keep it or not at that high price, and there were an awful lot of drops. There really were. The syndicate couldn't sustain it. The salesmen just didn't have the pull.

SD: Then a one year contract turned out to be kind of a bad decision?

RM: It may have.

SD: But at that, maybe it was a good thing. I was just recently talking with Alex Toth about how some of the new strips aren't even getting a year trial time and they're dropping them in three or four months before the public can get used to them, and that's not a fair test. If I had my choice I think I would go for the one year, insisting on a one year contract. And of course guys like Gary Trudeau have it written into his contract that every paper that takes *Doonesbury*, cannot put it on a page other than the comic page and they can't shrink it down beyond a certain size.

RM: Great.

SD: And as far as I know this is the first cartoonist who ever dictated terms to the client newspapers, and he's getting away with it. But somebody has to save the industry. They're just butcherizing this artwork by shrinking it smaller and smaller, and especially for guys like you who put in all this beautiful detail. And then with the plastic plates, shrinking stars and photographers who don't even know how to shoot a line drawing, and the thing gets washed out. It must have been a nightmare seeing some of your stuff be reproduced so poorly.

RM: I did have to work with the syndicate. The *L.A. Times*



Syndicate was brand new at the time. They'd brought in a whole bunch of new people just to run this *STAR WARS*, and they got *STAR TREK* soon after and a couple other things, and they weren't used to art at all. They were into syndicalizing novels, so there was a little bit of a training process there, a teaching process. And with Carol and with everybody at Lucasfilm, the whole thing was a beginning.

SD: It was great that they were open to your suggestions. Some of these people aren't. Did you actually go down and show them what was an acceptable Star, for instance?

RM: Yes, I would go in with the proofs and point out to them... Well first we had a problem with the size. They couldn't decide what size I was to draw, and what size they were going to reproduce for most newspapers in the country. They left it up to me to go to out-of-town newspaper stands and I bought tons of newspapers, came home and averaged all the strips and found a size that was right in the middle, and then drew proportion-

ately to that, and decided that this to me looks the best, not knowing at the time that these are newspapers like the *Santa Ana Register* that stretch the strip photographically as they photograph it. And the *San Diego* paper too, don't they?

SD: Yes, they put on something called a shrink lens, and it's supposed to make the type more readable as printed so that it won't blow up, but what it does is really stretch it in one direction or another. The *L.A. Herald Examiner* makes *Star Wars* squatty so that all the faces look like pumpkin shapes, and the *San Diego Tribune* stretches it so that they all look elongated like El Greco. You can tell by Milton Caniff's square signatures. If the square is a flat, squatty rectangle, then it's been stretched. I'm telling you they're trying everything to sabotage us. It's unnecessary to do that to the comic page.

RM: It's dumb. Maybe on certain strips it doesn't really matter. But it's strange. In the *Register*, the one you can really tell it as is *Little Orphan Annie*, and you'd think *Orphan Annie* is drawn



simple enough that no real distortions would be visible, but that's the one it shows up most on.

SD: With Targan you wrote the stories as well as drawing them. I don't think we touched on your writing very much in the last interview, but how did you approach the writing? Did you have a notebook and write an entire continuity or did you write it as you went along by having it briefly plotted out and filling in detail as you went?

RM: The way that I much prefer to write, and this drives the STAR WARS people up the wall, because the way I write and the way I much prefer to write is to sit down and conceptualize a story. I decide what the main conflict is, who the villain is and what he is, how it ends, how the hero solves it, who the main characters are through the story, and that's it. I don't write it out, pre-plot it or anything of that nature. I didn't even break it down into eight weeks or twelve weeks or anything of this nature, but would just start writing, thinking it would be fresher and more fun for me, every week, to do what was necessary for that Sunday page or that particular set of six dailies. Well with Targan it was

great because Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc., and the syndicate never cared; and they let me do it.

The STAR WARS people were so incredibly production-conscious, they were so careful with their product, that they wanted to see a synopsis of the story, and when I had that done, if I could turn in a complete shooting script so they could look at every single word, decided whether that word belonged there or not, and then they were just delighted because then they would send it back to me and in that case they would want me to follow exactly what I had written in the script because they had approved it. I never did it once. I could never get to that point once where I could get that far ahead and get that much work done. Carol was very kind to me. She let me go for a full year this way, doing it. But at the end of the year she said, "It isn't working. We don't have enough control. We really don't feel that you're taking the stories where we want them to go, and the basic problem is that we don't see it enough in advance to help you on it, or to correct it. It comes in almost on deadline, ready to go to the syndicate, and then we don't have enough time to send it back to you." I said

that I can't write the other way because I don't have time, I don't like to write the other way, and I have no objection if you find a writer that you like, so they got some other writers.

SD: I had forgotten that you were writing it, too, in the beginning. Then you were writing and drawing two strips at the same time?

RM: Well actually three features. A daily and two Sundays. Let me say something here. I have gone back and re-read the strips that I did, and Carol was absolutely right, they were not within the realm of STAR WARS, the original motion picture. What I did was what I thought would be necessary to create a successful comic strip, and I took the two robots and made them far more leading characters than the movie did. Secondly, Carol, on behalf of the STAR WARS management, said they did not want to have but one or two characters in each story, for this reason. If in the dailies we had Luke and the robots, and in the Sunday we had Luke and the robots, and they were separate stories, people would get all confused. They just couldn't understand why Luke and the robots did one thing on Sunday and another



A LONG TIME
AGO IN A GALAXY
FAR FAR AWAY...
IT IS A PERIOD OF
CIVIL WAR. REBEL
SPACESHIPS STRIKING
FROM A HIDDEN BASE
HAVE WON THEIR FIRST
VICTORY AGAINST THE
EVIL GALACTIC EMPIRE!

STAR WARS

The Adventure Begins at the Cinema

thing on Monday, because they were separate stories. So STAR WARS management said not to use the same characters at the same time in both stories. I said that's logical, therefore I won't do it.

slightly and stay within the world that the original movie had.

SD: I agree.



SD: That's what Buck Rogers used to do. Buck Rogers appeared in the Sunday page. It was usually Buddy on the Sunday page but in the dailies it was all Buck Rogers.

RM: Not only did you have to keep the two stories separate but there were a couple of things that they insisted on. They had given me the guidelines and I went ahead and did some stories that I like. Oh, and they also said do not tell anything like the movie. Do not tell anything that could be construed to be telling the second movie, and a whole bunch of real restrictions, so I did my own type stories.

I'm going back and re-reading them, and re-reading the ones that Garber did, and the other writers. I like the stories that I did better.

SD: Why, Ray?

RM: Because I like the way the characters act as characters. They're more whole, they hang together as characters better. They use the dialogue from the original movie much more con-

RM: The other writers had to turn in scripts, and they had a hell of a time going through some of the management driven there, and finally the script would come out mangled, rewritten and everything. A committee job. And all the characters began getting into all the stories.

SD: The stories, to me, weren't clear then, either. I don't know if the accent was more on the action or the adventure than it was on the people.

RM: That was the other thing. Still, and you hit on it. When management had the other writers, management said, "You will do eight week stories, you will not do stories that go for nine weeks, or ten weeks, or sixteen weeks like Manning did." And they would try to jam these incredible long novels into eight weeks, and I know better than that. I didn't even tell stories. I told little happenings that would go on and then you could move off and tell another

kind of happening.

SD: I should mention why they tried that. They felt that the public didn't have the staying power because they could watch television and get a whole story in ninety minutes or two hours. That's a big mistake. When the mini-series like *Roseanne* came on, biggest ratings they ever had, they realized that they had underestimated the staying power of the audience. So that argument went right out the window.

RM: It was wrong in the first place.

SD: One of my friends just told me that he thought Milton Caniff was better when he was doing longer continuations. Why does he have to be limited to thirteen words? He runs the ship, why can't he write a longer story? I repeated it to Milton and he said, "Well I own it, that's true, but I will take orders from the editors and the editors just can't tolerate it," but this thought made an impression on



Mit, and with this current story he says he might try it out as a book, and he says, "I am just letting it run on as long as it takes."

RM: Great!

SD: Sometimes while depicting the Sunday pages, he says perhaps one Sunday just develops the characters and situation a little more, but it doesn't really advance the story, but he doesn't care. And now he's doing a World War One dream sequence and he says, "I'm letting it run as long as I want it to."

RM: Good for him. I think that in the long run what I had been writing would have been better for the STAR WARS strip, especially if I had gone back a little closer to the original movie or THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, but I wasn't allowed to do that. Goodwin is using a lot more reference to this stuff now.

SD: I was going to say he's got the feel of the movie.

RM: Good luck, by the way, to Al Williamson.

SD: What do you think of Al

Williamson's STAR WARS?

RM: First, Al Williamson called me in July of '80, after I had run into health problems that made it necessary to leave STAR WARS. He called me and told that STAR WARS had contacted him to do the strip and he wondered what I felt about it and said that if I had any objections at all, if I had any desire to continue the strip, he would back out so fast it would make STAR WARS' head spin. He did not want it if I at all wanted to continue, which I thought was most admirable. I thought it

was a beautiful, gentlemanly thing to do, and I told him so, but I also told him that there was no way that I could continue the strip, that I thought he was just a superb and ideal choice on their part.

Al was one of the ones who was considered before I even took the strip, but who, for whatever reason he had at the time, did not take it. Then they came to me. Al is in the field and is a superb science fiction illustrator, the difficulty being that he draws so fine. He and I discussed for quite a while whether or not he really should get into that kind of detail on the kind of size they're printing these days, and he gave the impression, wrongly or rightly, that he was going to be working for reproduction of the strip in places other than newspapers, and that his style is perfect for that.

SD: Russ, you mentioned that you had to leave STAR WARS for health reasons. How long had you been drawing STAR WARS when you left the strip?

RM: From June of '78 to June of '80.



SD: Some of those dailies and Sundays are some of the best work you've ever done; just extraordinarily beautiful panel breakdown, and I did manage to see several Sunday pages that were complete with the top title bar and everything. But even the one-third pages were broken down with an interesting composition. Do you have any comments on the importance of composition in your work?

RM: Well, thank you for the compliment. First, I didn't originate it but I think I did perfect the use of the United Features particular format Sunday pages in the various ways that they could be broken or fragmented into other than just the straight one-two-three-four

imaginative breakdowns of his Sunday pages, and they're based on what we did, and so is Mike Groll, now, on the Sunday Tarzan. He's breaking it down into bigger and smaller panels using the way we perfected on Tarzan. And I imagine there may be ways that I didn't think about that they can go even further with and they probably will.

SD: Do you know if they have any plans of reproducing your STAR WARS comic book with a quality printing job?

RM: No. The last time I talked to them, I said I would be glad to do all the additional work and even the mechanical work of laying the thing out, and they

Comics and the first issue of a new character that he owns will be coming out this month. Mike Groll is also doing a comic for them. Do you feel that this might be part of your future, too? Do you think that you might do your own character for an independent publisher?

RM: I might. The field is just wide open, and it is challenging and I want to do it. I haven't linked the health problem yet and I can't work full time. If I can, along with the paintings that I'm doing, I may get around to doing some comics. I've got some ideas.

Looking at the field as a whole, though, my personal feeling is that it certainly has not, by any means, even started



panel shot. I did as much as I possibly could in getting big panels and little panels and still retain the possibility for the individual newspapers of turning that particular format into either a tabloid, a one-third or a half or any format they wanted. It's a very tight restriction they put on it, but there are changes you can make and I notice now that Al Williamson is using much more

and they would think about it and get back to me, but as you know the company has gone north to San Rafael and isn't in North Hollywood anymore at all, and I have no contact with them.

SD: A lot of the artists are going into alternative publications. Jack Kirby has just signed a contract with Pacific

to achieve the promise that I had. Harry Minter thinks it's just a miserable publication. The stories are vague at best. The philosophy and the moral content is just scorable in too many cases.

It is the same old Marvel in a bigger page, on slicker paper, and it's just a mess.

SD: There's no substance, it



there! A lot of sound and fury.

RM: It's just a *Murder* ten-cent comic book.

SD: How about some European publications?

RM: There's some great ones. SDs: You know in Europe the creator owns the character and can do things he's not afraid will be stolen by somebody else. A lot of American cartoonists don't want to give their best because the big company has to own it, and I think that's holding back the market, too. They're saving their "A" stuff.

RM: I think it's great that Jack and Mike Groll could go that route and I hope it's successful for them.

To my mind, the best European ones are the ones that don't look like American at all, and that would be Titi Titi, Asterix, Mœbius.

SDs: How about the Japanese comic books?

RM: I haven't seen any really good ones.

SDs: How about Japanese animation?

RM: I haven't seen any really unusual stuff.

SD: Do you remember Osamu Tezuka's *Phoenix* 322?

which you saw at the San Diego comic-con last year?

RM: Yes, I saw the whole thing.

SDs: What was your opinion of that?

RM: It was too long (laughing).

SDs: It was also late. I was in the same audience. It didn't let out until four in the morning.

RM: It's hard to remember and it was hard to keep awake. The animation was just great and the story was good, but there were touches in it where it could have used editing. It could have used George Lucas for producer and Marsha Lucas for editing and really tightened that racial down to something that would have rung.



SD: What have you been doing since you left STAR WARS?

RM: Recuperating, number one. It was a very serious illness and I'm not out of it yet. I'm doing some fine arts painting with western themes because that happens to be a good seller. No matter, it seems, who is doing western scenes you can sell them. I can sell everything I paint. However, not for a big amount of money yet.

SD: What medium do you

work in?

RM: Watercolor and oil. Mostly watercolor. My work appears more in watercolor than it does in oils.

SDs: Do you find this a challenge to work with color after working with black and white for so long?

RM: Oh yes. Well I had to learn something. You always learn something. The Tazman paintings that you saw were meant to be bright and vivid because they're comic strip derivatives. In fact those were designed for t-shirts and Tazman is a bright vivid character anyway, but when I came to getting into the westerns, or fine arts field, the galleries would take a look and they said, "Well we don't want illustrations. It looks like an illustration done to have impact, or done to make a very strong quick impression, and why would anybody want that on their wall?" They wouldn't want that strong, quick flash-looking explosion on the wall of their living room. I began to realize that there is a difference in the way that a person who wants to buy a painting to hang on their wall and a magazine editor looks at a painting. I had to learn not to do illustrations but to do fine art.





Everything has to be more harmonious, far fewer colors, far less brilliance.

SD: But it's fun for you, isn't it?
RM: Yeah!

SD: You look more relaxed and you look like you're having more fun than I've ever seen you.

RM: Well so all the talents and purposes I haven't worked for a year.

SD: You mean you haven't had the deadlines to meet, and that's for the first time in how many years?

RM: Since 1992. That's 27 years.

SD: God, it must be wonderful.

RM: Well, it was necessary. I absolutely had to do it or be under.

SD: It was for health reasons, but I think an artist, when he has his back against a wall and has to meet deadlines, something has to be sacrificed. He's still turning out a beautiful product, but maybe part of his soul goes out of it because he's under pressure. Part of the pure enjoyment must go out of it, too. There must have been days when you really hated your work, you hated to get that thing out for deadline. And I would say that an artist should never have to hate his work.

RM: Well, I really don't think I ever hated it. God, and I think I'm capable of hating. But I don't really hate my work, I just loved what I was doing too much to hate it. And I never felt, "Well if only I didn't have to go to that drawing board," because of good family relationships and living where I do and all, there are enough other things in my life, like the fire department to pull me out and get me outside activities and all.

SD: The fire department?

RM: When the siren goes I'm just up and out of here, in fact if the siren blows I'll be up and out of here right now and you've parked so that I'll go right through your car!

You're thrust into a whole other environment. One that has strong, vivid necessities.

Danger, for one thing, and physical activity so different from this that it gives me an absolute change of pace. I'm referring to my job as volunteer fireman in the canyon where I live. I drill, three or four times a month, plus the alarms for fires or rescues or automobile accidents or whatever it is we get calls on. Airplane crashes, floods, all this kind of jazz.

SD: How did you become involved with that as well as your other work? Did you request it?

RM: They kept insisting that I get on the fire department. This community has one hundred houses and almost every single man, and a lot of the women, work downtown. There's no one here in the daytime. This community is sixteen miles from the nearest town or twenty miles from the nearest police or fire department help, or medical help. So when the community found out that I was here all day sitting at this drawing board, and the fact that I had gotten involved with the water district and things so they knew that I was physically capable, I was here three years before I joined it. I got my fifteen year plus two or three years ago so it'll be 30 years in '83.

SD: Did you ever have any close calls? Have you ever pulled anyone out of a burning building?

RM: No.

SD: What are some of the average fires like here? What type of fires are there?

RM: Generally speaking we don't have house fires. People in this area are just too conscious of fire, but we've had very large

brush fires, and I've saved houses by being the only fire truck there and being in charge of that fire truck and back-firing around the house and saving the house, and the people that were in it were standing there wringing their hands, you know, and when a fire truck pulls up and you get out and you start setting a fire they think you're nuts.

SD: When the two fires meet, don't they kind of explode and stop right there?

RM: That's right. You stop one fire by lighting another one. We do rescues out here on the highways from automobile accidents or motorcycle accidents and we save lives there.

SD: Do you ever use any of your experiences in your stories?

RM: I really don't remember.

SD: You mentioned foliage earlier. It's really funny, I remember walking with Burne Hogarth over to a studio to meet an artist friend of mine who hadn't been able to make it to the convention because of work, and here was a clump of bushes that looked exactly like a Hogarth type of bush. It looks like a fountain of spiked leaves and I pulled him over and said, "There is your bush!" And he said, "My God, I made that up out of my head!" And he was just totally fascinated that one of his creations actually existed in nature. He got the biggest charge out of that, and of course when we went up to the studio my friend was busy working at his drawing board and I tapped him on the shoulder and he says, "Shel, I thought you were at the convention." And I said, "Daaa, I want you to meet Burne

Hogarth," and the guy almost fell off his stool!

RM: That's really great.

SD: They had a nice visit, and Burne autographed his books and everything.

What's the Western subject matter that you paint now?

RM: Well, frankly I don't think the Western craze is going to last forever. For one thing there's too many incredibly good people in it, and they're going to wear it out. But what I have done a little bit more than Western art is that I'm specializing in Southern California history, Spanish, Dona. That's the kind of painting I'm specializing in and while it's allied to the Western field, it's really much more specialized than that, and since I'm selling only, so far as I can tell, only here in Southern California, I don't see any reason to change. It's something I know about, and it's the landscape I really love, I love the classic Spanish hills that we have around here and as long as I can make my way doing that, that's what I'll continue to do.

If you discover that there's a market for the Tarnan stuff, then I'll do more of those.

SD: What has been the fan reaction to your leaving STAR WARS?

RM: Well, I haven't heard any angry letters from people saying "Thank God you're finally gone." There have been some letters saying they were sorry I'd gone and asking me why I had to leave. There were some letters not particularly pleased with the people who took over the strip immediately after I left, so they were forwarded to me. They were addressed



Illustration of a prehistoric scene, featuring a large dinosaur, a man, and a gorilla in a jungle setting.

to me although they happened to be commenting on other people's work.

We got an awful lot of fan mail, but invariably it said "I think you're great. If you have the time would you please do this..." And you discount those, because they're after something for themselves. They're not really doing anything that would interest me as a creator, therefore I don't pay any attention to them. Even if it said, "I think you stink, if you've got some time, do me a drawing", I wouldn't pay any attention to it. They want something. I don't think fan mail is a good criteria for us in the cartooning business. I really don't.

SD: Except when a fan is literate, like when the relationship thing of Steve Canyon in Harrisburg came up. One really beautiful letter a fan had written was forwarded to Milton Caniff and he was charmed by it. Milton sent me a Xerox copy. The guy didn't want anything from Milton. It was all about his appreciation of the work, and why.

RM: Now there's a letter I would read, too. It had a point to it.

SD: Did you ever have fans write in to suggest stories to you?

RM: Yes, at first.

SD: Did you ever listen to anybody?

RM: No, you really can't. It's like movies. As I understand the movies won't even read unsolicited scripts because it's so easy later for someone to make claims that they plagiarized



them, and it just isn't worth it.

SD: What do you think of the Work-For-Hire contracts that the comic book companies ask the artist to sign?

RM: It came along after I left the industry so I'm speaking from an outsider's viewpoint, but it would certainly seem to me that it is of value to work for a comic book company, no matter what the contract is. If you are learning, if you are young, and you need the work, and they are going to hire you and let you learn while you earn, which is what I did. If you're a genius, and you come up with your own character, and the whole thought of that company owning that character bothers you, well then don't give them that character, save it until you can turn it out on your own. But in the meantime, I really don't think that the Work-For-Hire contract is that anticompetitive. It may well be for the older guys. If they feel that strongly about it, they shouldn't work for the company. They should go out and sell their own character, get on their own and they're going to come out better in the end anyway making their own money. But in the meantime, those of us who have to work, who have families, I don't see too much wrong with the Work-For-Hire contract. The company has to protect itself, the artist

has to protect himself. Maybe it needs refinement, but at the moment I think it's possible to use it.

SD: Well thank you very much. That's quite different from what I've heard the last couple of days. It's realistic, the point about you being a family man with children to support. I'm sure that's an important part of it for a young artist.

RM: Sure. I don't think they're going to kill themselves. It may well be that they'll have to reserve certain good characters they come up with for themselves, just put them in the back drawer and keep them. Don't give them to this company that wants to have total ownership of everything. Why should you? Use their characters, learn how to draw, learn how to write, earn while you're learning, and then get out and do it on your own, which is what most of us do anyway.

SD: What advice do you have for someone who's trying to start up an adventure strip for newspapers?

RM: (Laughing).

SD: That's a dirty laugh. Run.

RM: Immediately go to work for a comic book company on a Work-For-Hire basis. No. Turn out the strip, do the best you can, and submit it. What else can you do? If that syndicator is full up of adventure strips, and in this day and age they invariably are going to be, then they'll tell you and you go do something else. But why should you stop yourself, ever, because of doubts about whether or not you're going to be accepted? That's for cowards. You're never



going to do anything that way anyway. If you've got something on your mind, if you're good, do it! And if you get turned down, try again later. That's the way I got to work originally for Whitman publishing company and Dell comics. After I got out of the Army in 1952, they rejected me four times. Who knows why? It may have been because I was terrible. It may have been because they didn't have anything for me right at the moment and on the fifth time in, maybe I had improved and maybe they suddenly had a script which nobody else wanted so they gave it to me. You just go back and you go back and you go back. Be stubborn.

SD: Russ Manning, I want to thank you very much for an interesting interview, and we're now going to be watching your work in the future. Personally, I'd like to see you do some more Tarzan work. How do you feel about doing a Tarzan album like those two albums you did for European publications? Those were masterworks. You think you'd like to get back into it?

RM: No, for the reason we have just gone through. I have paid my dues and anything I do now is going to be for Russ Manning. I will no longer work for a company that owns the

character, that is going to make all the money off of it, especially residuals or royalties. At a certain point, the young man who has learned to cut the mustard in this field or in any field, should get out on their own because that's the only way when you get to be 30 or 40 that you're going to get to have any money. If I were to do Tarzan right now, unless HES, Inc. were to write a very unusual contract, I would get paid a salary for turning out the albums, for doing the artwork and doing the writing. I would get paid a salary and it would be a good one because they're a good company, but that's just a salary. There's no residual, no long term gain to me and my family. Why not put that same energy, that same creative effort, into something that only I have the rights to. So that's what I intend to do. I think that's where a great many of the people who are well-known, or well-trained in the field, all the guys who are making such a big noise about the Work-For-Hire, like Nipil Adams, Harry Windsor-Smith and Curben are on absolutely the right track. As much as you can possibly afford, do it for yourself and sink or swim, because the money that comes in later will be yours. It won't belong to Edgar Rice Burroughs or Marvel or someone else.

SD: You're differentiating between the young artist just starting out and the artist who already has a name for himself. You feel that at some point that artist should break away and not work on somebody else's strip where somebody else owns the character.

RM: Yes, just as a generality, yes, there's a difference.

SD: America's the only place where creators don't own their own characters.

RM: You can own your own characters.

SD: I mean from an established publishing company. That's why people are so against the wall. It's contrary to the rest of the world.

RM: What right would I have to go into Marvel right now and say, I will draw Captain America for you, and you no longer own it, you're going to give me all the rights, Captain America belongs to Marvel. So screw 'em. I won't do Captain America. And if they can't find a young person who needs the work to do Captain America, then it's just going to go down the tubes. Too bad. But I think there will be people who need the work, need the training and need the money.

SD: Well what about the



people who actually created Captain America?

RM: It's too late for them.

SD: Well then you're saying that the young guy who has the potential Captain America or Superman should hold it back.

RM: Yes, he should do it on his own, or go to Marvel and say, "Hey, I've got a good character here. You let me own it and I'll let you publish it."

SD: Sergio Aragones said he doesn't even want to own it. He just wants ten percent of all the royalties. That would be enough. Let them own it but give him ten percent. He'd be satisfied.

RM: Sergio is very experienced and he knows European publishing and all the others and

so I would follow his advice.

SD: Yes, but he also noted that there has never been a millionaire comic book cartoonist, and yet Charles Schultz with Peanuts has become a multi-millionaire, and several other cartoonists have become very wealthy. I think Trudeau is well on his way and Mort Walker is there several times over. And this is all because of the fifty-fifty split with the syndicate. But I guess the comic book publishers would never allow that.

RM: Well they will from now on because the word is out. If you want to own your own character, don't sell it to them, and somewhere along the line, whether it's Pacific Comics, or

Aardark Verbeke. They've been after me, there's a number of people who have talked to me about doing things that I would own and they would publish and that's really all it needs. Somewhere along the line in the next ten years there will be a millionaire cartoonist who comes out of all this.

SD: I think so, too. But the thing of ownership is not the last word either because Schultz does not own Peanuts when you get rights down to it. United Features owns Peanuts, yet because of the fifty-fifty split, he was still able to become wealthy. So I don't think he cares. And Chester Gould never owned Dick Tracy, but he became wealthy. So I sure hope the comic book people get a better shake.

RM: There's a thought here, though. The comic books that Marvel and D.C. are doing right now, are so poorly printed, so miserably colored, that it's not even worth considering working for them. If I were a young person, I would do it just to make a living, but I would find someone who's willing to do excellent printing, excellent color, and I hope Pacific doesn't go off by going to that same bad...

SD: Sports is doing their books, too.

RM: Then they're going to look just as shabby as the ones that Marvel and D.C. are getting from the printer, and the kids are going to turn them down because they're so poor looking! You may as well go to a private publisher and get it done right and sell it in the specialty stores.

SD: Denis Kitchen is going that route and is doing a beautiful job with Will Eisner's stuff. Again, thanks very much.

Edgar Rice Burroughs' **Tarzan**
OF THE APES

and *The Glorious!*

In an unbroken
valley deep in
central West Africa,
a strange people
of warriors stand
to fight.
At fighting and
peace all around
the land, countless
tribes are engaged
to an intricate
magnificent struggle!

WRITTEN AND
ILLUSTRATED BY
JOHN GLAVIN



WITH REAL PEARL HARBOR... FIGHTING
WITH BOTH MODERN AND ANCIENT... ALL
WITH THE SAME DREAM...

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STRANGE... VERY STRANGE, SURE! — JAMES AND THE STARRY EYES WERE IN THE MOUNTAINS... THE MOUNTAINS...



HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT? YOU KNOW ABOUT A PROTECTING MAN... ABOUT...



YES! YES!





*The massive stone
monoliths of the
city were made from
the rock of the
mountains to which...*

ANDRE! DO
YOU RECOGNIZE
IT? I'VE VISITED
THIS PLACE
MANY TIMES!

AND, ANDRE! WE'VE
SEARCHED THEM, FATHER—
THE REMAINS OF THE
FAMOUS BABYLONIAN ARMY
THAT FLED BABEL, INTO
AFRICA, AND ENDED IN
MEXICO... IN THE 10TH
CENTURY A.D.

THEY'VE

THEY'VE
THEY'VE

ANDRE! ALL BUT
DEATH—AFTER ALL
THE TIME, TO THE
LANGUAGE OF THE
MEXICANS: DO
YOU UNDERSTAND
MEXICAN TARTAR?

NOT
OF A
PROFANE
SILENCE.

THEY'VE BEEN
TO SPEAK TO ALL THE HISTORY
THAT'S IN THERE, ANDRE!
WE'VE BEEN FOLLOWING!

THIS
DAY!

I, GABRIEL, KING OF
NEW BABYLON, DO
WELCOME YOU
GABRIEL!

LONG, LONG AGO, THE
KING OF BABYLON
TOLD THAT ONE DAY A
MEXICAN WOULD BE BORN
INTO US, SO ANDRE
BY THE NAME OF BABY
AND BATTLE, SHE
WOULD BE BORN AS
GABRIEL, AND THAT
A MEXICAN FROM AN
UNKNOWN LAND
WOULD WIN US!

ON THE
MORNING WE
WILL BEGIN THE
CONTEST.

THE
PETERAGE
WILL
FIGHTING
MAN
ACHIEVE
YOU.

IS THE
SUPREMACY
HONOR
AND
WORTHY
OF GOD
AND HIS
HEARD.

OF MY
DAUGHTER
AND ONLY
CHILD.

THE
MADNESS!

WHAT OF THIS
TORGAN? IS
THE RESULT?

I SUSPECT AN
ILLUSION, JOHNNY.
PERHAPS A COMBINATION OF VERY RARE
SACRED CHANNELS, A
BRILLIANTLY BUILT
IMAGE PROJECTED
IN HERE BY DIMPLE
LENSES... AND A
STRONGLY LOVELY
GAL!

GET AWAY, WARRIORS!
INTO THE QUARTERS
PREPARED FOR YOU!
ONE... AND BEST WELL
FOR TOMORROW YOU
WILL BEAT THEM!
BETTER STRENGTH!



AND THE GODS
OF MATHIA AND
FORTUNE BLESS
THIS TRIAL BY
JURY!

AND THE GODS
OF MATHIA AND
FORTUNE BLESS
THIS TRIAL BY
JURY!

NOW, LET THOSE WHO
BARE THE NAME OF THE
G-EMPIRE MAKE THEM-
SELVES KNOWN!



BEHOLD, I'VE BRED
MARRIAGE WORTH
OF MY DAUGHTER!

OPEN
THE DOOR
TO THE
TRIAL!

AND THE GODS
OF MATHIA AND
FORTUNE BLESS
THIS TRIAL BY
JURY!

BEHOLD YOUR PRIZE!
THE FIRST WARRIOR TO PASS
THE GUARDER SHALL BRIDGE
THE PRIZE!



*Running everywhere in our
unplanned war, a future
already past and made more.*



ANDRE STILL
FIGHTS FORWARD
AGAINST THOSE
UNWANTED!



HE WAS A PRISONER... AND A
GANGSTER... IN THE ACCIDENT...
BUT NOW THE WORLD IS HIS
EVERYTHING FOR A...A...



WOW! THOSE
FIGHTERS... THEY
ARE REALLY GOOD!

HE WOULD
TO THOSE
WITH THE
IN A...A...







JOIN TURTAN FOR ANOTHER GREAT ADVENTURE—NEXT WEEK!

MIKE ROYER ON RUSS MANNING

RECC: Tell us about your work with Russ Manning.

ROYER: I lettered and inked the first 15 weeks of the Star Wars comic strip, daily and Sunday, and while Rick Hobart and Dave Stevens get mentioned in captions, I don't. To my knowledge, Stevens and Hobart never did the extent of work on the strip that I did. I did full talks and lettering and they did the normal method of working with Russ, which was "bit and pieces." At the same time, Russ and I were doing the Tarzan strip, so we were doing six daily Star Wars, a Star Wars Sunday and a Tarzan Sunday each week.

The last Tarzan story which he told was at least 12 weeks, maybe more than that — a story involving Jane and Tarzan and I got credit. The pages were signed Manning and Royer. It was interesting that the *Santa Ana Register* had been one of the few papers in the country to run the strip for years, and years, and years, and the first Sunday that I got credit on the strip, was the week that they decided to drop it after 40 years.

RECC: How did the strip in so few papers in the U.S. because it was expensive?

ROYER: No I think editors just thought it was old hat.

RECC: How did you come to know Russ?

ROYER: I first met Russ in April of 1968. In Sept. of '68, I had gone to the World Science Fiction Convention that was held in Oakland, and I'd taken an amateur comic book that another Barroughs fan had written and I drew, adapting, with permission, *The Wizard of Venus*. I primarily

went because I wanted to meet Russ. I assumed, being a naive fan at the time, that if a guy was a fan of Barroughs, and was a member of the Barroughs Bibliophiles, and lived in Southern California, that of course he would go up to the Wildkloos for the Dum-Dum. I later found out that Russ very rarely went to those kind of things. I met Camille Casademont, Jr. there and gave him a couple of copies of *Wizard*. He brought them down to the L.A. area, showed it to Russ and mentioned that I'd wanted to meet him. I later sent Russ some sample comic book pages, and three months later, around January or February of '69, he wrote me back and thanked me for the samples. He said that he thought they showed some promise and that "If I ever needed any help I don't see why you wouldn't be capable of it." I mentioned that to Car and he said that, "If I were you I'd move to Southern California and move into Russ's back yard." So, in essence, that's what I did. I packed up my family, took a "one month vacation" from the sign shop I was working at, borrowed some money from a finance company, and put half my possessions in a big U-haul trailer, and moved to Southern California. I had been living in a little town in Oregon called Albany, where I was a silkscreen delineator in Corvallis, about 11 miles away.

I think it was about the second day I was here in Southern California that I went out and visited Russ and spent about ten hours talking with him. He said that I could do some work for him. It amounted to mostly circling balloons and bordering panels. The first story I worked on was

"The Aliens" 4-page in the back of *Magnus* #12. I asked some of the Aliens. When he let me do some pencilling, it was on a Korak that he was doing. In a few of the panels he would leave the backgrounds and some of the figures roughly pencilled, then I would tighten up the pencils and he would approve them or correct them, and I would ink the bits and pieces. I rarely did anything that you could point to and say was a whole page that I inked, it was what I considered, at that time, what "assisting" was, is that I never did a complete place of work. It was bits and pieces. Rather than asking someone or ghosting for them, to me it was assisting, and I began to learn a lot from Russ. After I was here for a month, I got a job for the Grantz/Lawrence Animation Studio on the limited animation Marvel Super Heroes Series. That developed into doing layouts on the first network Spider-Man series. I was continuing to do assisting with Russ when Western Publishing Co. (Gold Key/Comico) wanted to get more work from Russ. He told them that the only way he would be able to turn out more work would be if I worked with him much more than I was, but the only way I could do that and leave the animation business would be to have a full time work in comic books. In a way, I was kind of lucky, because I got a call from Western Publishing and they asked me to come in. I started things for them and assisting Russ. It's kind of funny the way it turned out, because a short time after that, because of the work he was doing on the Tarzan comic books, he was offered the comic strip and he had to give up his work at Western, but I had my foot in the door of comic books.

The first six or eight weeks of Russ doing the Tarzan strip I didn't work with him on it. As I remember, at about the time he started the strip, he was going to try to do some of the *Magnus* comics as well. The last book that he did any work on was "Threat From The Depths" (#88) the bulk of which was pencilled by Paul Norris. I wrote the book and I thought I had a much better title but they liked those silly titles. I wrote the story and Russ started to pencil it. I think he pencilled three pages of it. I pencilled equal to about four pages of the book. The way Russ worked he wouldn't just take a page and start at the top and work through it, he would roughly block some of the pages out, and then he would just bounce around from page to page. That was the way that he could keep his work consistent, so that if he had a bad day, those panels would be spread out

through a twenty-some page book rather than being a couple of pages in a row. He inked the same way. Then he said that he just couldn't do the book and do the strip at the same time. Western turned it over to Paul Norris and I became the full inker/letterer on *Magnus*. I was continuing to work on the Korak books, inking at least a couple of them.

After about six or eight weeks of Russ doing the Tarzan strip, I began assisting him on that. Basically it was still the same kind of thing. He'd give me a strip which was half finished and I would either tighten up pencils or just ink full pencils, apply most of the stipators, which was pretty much color labor, and eventually I would up lettering the strip as well. Towards the end of his run on the Tarzan strip, I was pretty much inking full time for Jack Kirby so I recommended Bill Strait to Russ and Bill worked with him the last year or two, at least on the dailies.

Then one day, Russ called me up and said that he was going to be doing the Star Wars newspaper strip but that he wanted to keep doing Tarzan and he asked me if I wanted to ink. I said, "Well, are you talking about giving me the page and I finish it? Under those circumstances, if what you want me to do are full inks and lettering -- I'm not interested in doing bits and pieces here and there -- and if I get a third of the originals, we're in business." He said okay, that I could have a third of the originals on Star Wars but not on Tarzan because he didn't get any of those back.

Say I almost forget the foreign albums! He did four of those for E.B.S., Inc. The first one I had nothing to do with, or the second either. Those were both Tarzan "In the Land That Time Forgot". The third book had Korak and some leopard people and I did a lot of lettering and inking on that. I don't know what a lot amounts to. There were 44 pages and I worked on ten or twelve pages of it. The last of the books, which was "Tarzan at the Earth's Core". I wrote all but the first ten pages. He wanted to do this Pellucidar book and he had an idea in mind, but he just didn't have the time to develop it, or perhaps it was based on a synopsis he'd gotten from Richard Kyle. I don't recall exactly.

Working with Russ was interesting. I sat there for four years and said, "Russ, why don't we take Tarzan to Pellucidar," and he wouldn't make any comments. Then finally, one day, just before I left the strip, he said, "You know, I'm gonna' take Tarzan to Pellucidar." The same kind of thing



happened with Richard Kyle. I'm not denigrating Ram. It's just that you could sit there for four years saying, "take Tarzan to Pellucidar," and it wouldn't interest him until one day he'd say, "Why don't I take Tarzan to Pellucidar," and then it was a good idea because it came from him. We used to discuss other artist's work, but the bottom line was that he would have done it differently, and that would have been the right way. I think in many ways he may have been correct. Ram was a hell of an artist. I differed with his opinion of himself. He felt that he was an illustrator, and I firmly maintain that he was a cartoonist. I think that Ram felt that just being a "cartoonist"...well... that he was better than that, that there was something about that term that maybe he felt was demeaning. When people asked what he did he would say that he was an illustrator and leave it at that.

To me, Hal Foster was a cartoonist. A cartoonist is a guy that, for instance, draws all of his ears or knees, the same way. There are certain things that he does that are a kind of unconscious formula. Jack Kirby is obviously a cartoonist and there's nothing wrong with that. I think that Ram was a cartoonist because there were certain things he did that followed a certain formula. I've gotten into this discussion with people before, and Richard Kyle and were other people, I think, know what I mean, but it's really hard to put into words — the difference between an illustrator and a cartoonist.

RECC: Using your definition, who in comics is an illustrator?

ROYER: I would say that Al Williamson is an illustrator.

RECC: And yet there are recognizable traits in his work.

ROYER: Yes there are, but it's hard to say when you pin me down to it. I mean, Frazetta's a cartoonist. He does illustrative work, but he's a cartoonist. One of the things that shows Ram, the cartoonist, is the up-the-control-shots of his. The more is always drawn the same formula way. His ears were always the same Ram-blaming ear, which was based on Alex Raymond's ear. The ear that I draw is Mike Royer ear. Ram Manning ran Alex Raymond. Sorry...it's hard to explain my feelings on this subject without a lot of visual aids.

RECC: All of Ram's heroes looked like the same man and to me they always looked like William Lundigan. I would put William Lundigan's picture next to magazine and people would say, "My God, you're right!" William Lundigan is a very obscure actor but he's just someone I remember from "Men Into Space"...

ROYER: I guess I'm talking about something that's probably just a personal opinion, really. I mean it as a high compliment but I don't think that Ram saw it that way.



Ram was a very interesting guy to work for. I don't ever recall getting an ear and out compliment from Ram on any of the work that I did, for him, on his staff. The closest thing to a compliment in this page I have hanging here of my work that he liked. He signed it for me saying it's "the only other artist I've had the privilege of liking." I'm sure that a lot of that was intentionally flattery, so that it would look nice on the framed art. Ram did say some nice things about my work when it had nothing to do with his work. I sometimes think that Ram was so into his own work that he couldn't see it in someone else who was perhaps

emulating his work. I remember some short 4-page Tarzan stories that I pencilled and inked for Western Publishing. One of the stories had a head shot in it that I didn't lift from Russ. It was my layout, but when I was doing those stories for Chase Craig, he wanted them to look just like Russ Manning had done them. In fact, on the inking of the Paul Morris Tarzan books, he instructed me to ink them as if I were inking Manning, which bothered me because Morris and Manning are two completely different people. Inking Morris' pencils as if I were inking Manning,



to me, was a bastardization and you never got to see Morris' statement. Bad or good, I think the penciller's statement should shine through. That's the way I've always inked everybody. If I ink Don Heck it should look like Don Heck, if I ink Paul Morris it should look like Paul Morris. Anyway, back to that head shot. On this one particular panel, I really broke my heart when I did the tightened up pencils and inked it so that it would look like Russ and it was a Russ Manning Tarzan head. When he looked at the pages when I showed them to him, he didn't like the head, which I thought was kind of interesting because I probably could have found a head somewhere in his Tarzan comics that was exactly the same and just copied it. We all kind of catalogue these things in our head, and what I'd drawn wasn't that different.

Going back to that fantasy, *The Wizard of Venus*, looking through my old Prince Valiant Sunday pages, I found the same layout that I had used in a panel, which was a medium shot of heads that had just registered in my subconscious, and I pulled it out of my head. That happens to artists all of the time.

So I could have, in essence, just traced his Tarzan head and I don't know if it would have still been something he would have looked at

without some sort of critical comment. Hell, I've suffered from this same "problem." I've had other people ink my pencils and I cringed at the results, because I'm not satisfied unless it comes from my hand and I think Russ was the same way. Russ gave me my start in the business, and I really like Russ, but I think Russ was the kind of an artist that if it wasn't all his, it just wasn't good enough. With the amount of work that he was trying to run out, there was just no way that he could do it all himself. So in essence, I was like a necessary evil, but at the time I was the best of the necessary

evils. I could do it and I'm sure most of the people couldn't tell where Russ left off, and I began, on his strips. I really feel that he took so much pride in what he was doing that if he didn't do all of it I think he was unable to compliment you for emulating his style.

KRCC: You said that Russ took great pride in his work. Did he ever talk about the fact that he never had the great fun following that someone like Jack Kirby had?

KOYER: I think that Russ was a bit unhappy, but this is all purely opinion on my part. He was doing very good work. He had an opportunity to work at Marvel, but, of course, the instructions were "give it the Marvel look." If you're an artist and are at all creative, that's pretty shitty. You show them your work and they say, "Hey, that's great. We'll give you a story." I think he was talking to them about a Conan. Then they'd say, "But, make it look like this." Whatever the house look is, whether it be Buzoma, or some Kirby bastardizations. No creative artist likes to be told that, although a lot of us will compromise and do that if we're worried about putting food on the table. At the time, that wasn't a concern of Russ's, so he could go with his true feelings and say, "To hell with this. I don't need this."

You talk to all these guys, and I'm relying on memory. Key Thomas and Len Wein and others who like Russ's work and yet they wouldn't hire him unless he drew their house look.

EBCC: I heard that Russ applied once at D.C., and they told him that he'd have to come to New York to live and "try out."

ROYER: Yes, I think that was at the time when Russ was doing *Magnus*. Then ten years later it's "You can work for us but you have to draw our way." I would imagine that somewhere in Russ's ego was quite a bit of dissatisfaction with this attitude towards his ability. He did damn good work, was a hell of a storyteller—he learned from Hal Foster and Alex Raymond and Bernie Hogarth, but I think mostly Hal Foster was the biggest influence and Russ showed me all of that. By storytelling, I mean the visual continuity. Any idiot knows that you start at panel one and then go to panel two, but there are things that you do that make it so "comfortable" for the reader to do so and it has to do with blacks that will pull you off a page or pull you into the next panel, elements that touch in key places so that you will look up and see something in the corner of the panel rather than just look at it and try to figure a way into it, etc. Russ was a master at it. I learned a lot from Russ.

EBCC: How did you learn of Russ's death?

ROYER: It was really unbelievable the day that I got a call from Gene Henderson telling me that Russ had just died. Of course my first response was, "Yeah, sure," because I'd just seen Russ at the San Diego comic convention and he'd told me that everything was okay. As it turned out, he was making his last public appearance. Russ was very close about his problems. Richard Kyle was, I think, the only person you could consider a fan and a friend of Russ's who really knew much about what was going on with him. Richard spent several evenings with him at the hospital before he died.

It's still hard to think of Russ being dead. I guess that's true when people say the same thing about Wally Wood. Religion and theology aside, there is life after death. There is immortality as long as your work or something that you've done lives on after you. That is true immortality, to quote Jack Kirby. I guess I try not to think about Russ being gone because he was really a big influence on my life. Knowing him from 1968 on, I still never really knew Russ that well. I guess he

was really very guarded about his world outside of comics. We went on family outings with him.

I got together with Al Williamson. We have a lot of fun and it's kind of whacky, joking around like a couple of brothers who haven't seen each other for a long time. I'm probably closer to Al, and I've known him less than Russ. Al calls me every five or six weeks just to talk. We're family. In all the years I worked with Russ, there was never that feeling of family. When I'm working with Kirby, it's like family. Of course, the minute I'm not working for Jack, it's not. With Russ it was very strange.

It's funny, the things I've learned from Russ that have nothing to do with art. I remember once, when I'd been working with him for about six or eight months, my parents came down from Oregon to visit, and I had to go out to Russ's on a Saturday morning to pick up some pages. This was in the beginning when I was picking up stuff to work on at home. On this Saturday morning I took my folks out. I wanted them to meet Russ Manning. He was my mentor. They waited in the car as I went into the house. Russ was sitting at the kitchen table and I said, "Russ, my mom and dad are out in the car. Would you like to meet them?" He said, "No." I really didn't know how to react to that. The first thing I thought was, "Well, Goddamn you!" but he was being totally honest. He had no interest in meeting my folks. Introducing my folks to him was for me, not for him. He just told it like it was. In the last four or five years, I've found myself in situations where I'm saying things like that, and I instantly think of all those years that I would get pissed at Russ in those kinds of situations, and now I find myself doing the same thing because what I'm doing, I guess, is being honest to me. If somebody says, "Do you want to meet my folks," I have found myself saying "no." I guess being on both sides of the fence now, if I know the person very well and know that it really means something to them, I'll do it. Fifty percent of the time I won't. I don't know if that's something I learned from Russ or that's a maturity he already had being sixteen years older than me.

EBCC: Why do you think Russ's work never caught on with fans the way so many other have?

ROYER: I think I have an idea, and maybe why I took to his work when I picked up the first *Magnus*. It grabbed me because it was clean, direct, straightforward storytelling, it was dynamic with pretty girls. It was uncluttered. I

was going through a love affair with the work of Sy Barry and Dan Barry, and in this Magnum comic book was somebody drawing comic books as if they were comic strips, and maybe that's what I turned onto. The bulk of comic book fans aren't comic strip fans. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think they are. Russ didn't draw "Comic Books," in '64 you've got Marvel really taking off and he wasn't drawing Marvel comic books, he was drawing classic comic strips in comic books. Once I got really back into comic books, I searched out all the Russ Manning stuff I could find, and then rediscovered all the old Tazman comics that I'd read as a kid and realized that it was his "Brothers of the Spear" that I'd found so appealing as a youngster. Now it could help me locate an artist's early work I observed that whatever popularity he had was probably because he was drawing "comic strips". I guess that doesn't really answer the question for everyone. We have to find out why comic fans turn-on to the Marvel/D.C. style more than the "traditional" or "classical" approach to "story-telling".

RBCC: I always found his work attractive, exciting, and imaginative. A lot of the stories he illustrated were very interesting stories, certainly a lot more interesting than a lot of the stuff released at Marvel.

BOYER: I know that, in the late Sixties and early Seventies, the comic book artists whose work he liked best, or at least who I believe he liked best, were Gil Kane and Carmine Infantino, when they were liked by guys like Joe Glella. You look at that stuff and it doesn't look anything like the



comics of today. It's pretty much a comic strip approach. It's pretty straightforward.

Maybe that's so I loved comic strips and here was somebody that was drawing comic strips that just happened to be published in comic books. The comics that really turned me on as a kid were clean, crisp, sharp and weren't cluttered up with a lot of garbage. Interestingly enough, quite a few of them were comic strip reprint books. The Comics that turned me on was, even with all of his blacks and shadows, still pretty clean and crisp. Russ always wanted to do comic strips and he finally got to do it. However, I feel that Russ's finest work was the comic book *Magnum*. Yes...he did do a great *Tazman*. I feel that it's the best "Burrigale" *Tazman* strip that was ever done, but I think that *Magnum* was the finest things he ever did. He either wrote most of them or freely rewrote the scripts he was given.

RBCC: Do you know what happened to the originals from *Magnum*?

BOYER: Wally Green gave the Father of Pandemon, Jerry Ballis, the first two *Magnum* books. Jerry Ballis set out selling them and wrapping them all over London. Most of the originals, from the other issues were shredded or burned. When Chuck Craig was in a particularly good mood once, and still had about three books of '48, which he was keeping in the Los Angeles Western office, I talked him out of six pages. I've got those pages from "Have At Weather Control" and a couple from other books.

RBCC: If they were just going to discard the books,





why were they so reluctant to let loose of them?" ROYER: I've never understood why.

EBCC: Didn't Western pay a lot less than the other companies?

ROYER: Russ was their highest paid artist and he was getting something like \$99.00 a page for pencils and inks in '65. I think, at the time, it was about ten dollars less than Marvel and D.C. paid.

The first page that I penciled and inked for Western paid \$29.00 excluding lettering. It was about \$2.50 a page for lettering.

EBCC: Who did the cover paintings for the Dell/Gold Key books?

ROYER: Max Collier did most of the stuff in the Fifties and into the Sixties and then there were some covers done by a guy named Anderson, back East. I think Max is still the president of the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists.

EBCC: Do you know what books Russ was interested in doing when he applied at Marvel and D.C.?

EBCC: I suppose if he tried D.C. in the late Sixties, it was probably for something like The Flash or Green Lantern because Infantino and Kane were the artists that he liked at that time. I know that over the years, he liked Kane less because so much of Kane's stuff looked the same. I like Kane, though I think some of the best Kane I've ever seen were those Spider-Man he did that Johnny Bonetta inked. Bonetta put his own personality into the inking but they just gelled.

The kind of inking I like to do is when you don't know that I did it. Take Conan #28, "The Song Of Red Surps," which was Barry Smith's last total pencil/ink job. Well, there's a page in that which I inked, but I'll defy you to find it. That's the kind of inking I like to do. I guess I learned from Russ that if I'm working over some-

body else's style, I want the statement to be his. That's why sometimes I'm not that happy with the inking that I've done over Jack Kirby. I think I'm the closest to Kirby of any inker that he's ever had. I personally like Joe Simon's stuff on Jack, but Jack doesn't want that.

EBCC: Who were Russ's other influences?

ROYER: Foster, who I mentioned. And Hagarth, Raymond. All of Russ's women, as far as I'm concerned, were Raymond women. Laila, in Hapana, is a Raymond girl. Look at Jane in the Tarzan strip. It's Russ blessing, but you know that he's studied Raymond.

When it came to coloring the pages, he used to refer a lot to the kind of color that Warren Tufts did. He was a big fan of Warren Tufts, and although it's hard to believe when you look at his drawing, Russ was a big fan of Alen Toth. Those of us who know what's good all agree that Tuft is a genius.

Russ had a free hand when coloring the pages. I swapped for some of his hand-colored proofs on the Tarzan Sundays, and, if you look at the way he inked his women in the Tarzan daily strip the last few years, although it doesn't look anything like Stan Drake, he liked the way Drake did lips. There was a way he would use a kind of pen cross-hatching on lips to show that they had lipstick and color without inking them black. Like all of us, he was not immune to seeing something someone else had done, and once adopting it, it became his.

When we were getting this Edgar Rice Burroughs comic book company going (which never came off), Russ hired Alen Toth to pencil the album that I wrote all but the first ten pages of. Russ was going to ink it. As part of the comic operation, Russ had done up these big 38 x 24 sheets of the characters. There was a Jane model sheet, a Tarzan model sheet, and a Korak model sheet.



Illustrations by Russ Manning

The thing that drove Alex nuts, is that even though Russ was a cartoonist, and his noses and his ears and elbows were always done from a basic formula (and I use the word formula not in a derogatory sense, a lot of guys are formula and it's hell), every time Russ drew Tarzan, the ape man would have little differences, but still, it was Tarzan. There was one sheet of figures, one sheet of heads, and although every head was "Russ Manning's Tarzan," there were little differences here and there. For example, sometimes his chin would be narrower. Russ was very critical when he was editing the other artist's stuff. If our Tarzans didn't look close to his Tarzan, because everything was supposed to "look like" Russ, Alex's comment was, "Well Goddamit, all these heads are different! So how can he say that ours don't look like his?" That's some sense of it if it doesn't come from Russ's hand it just wasn't right.

Russ was influenced by Toth because his work was clean, straightforward, beautifully designed stuff. He was influenced by Tufts because Tufts took the best elements of the three giants and made them work beautifully...Hal Foster, Alex

Raymond and Milton Caniff. He told Caniff-type stories, his figures were Raymond figures, and his backgrounding was all the kind of stuff Hal Foster would do. Stan Drake to some extent, for the delineation of women, the eyes and lips.

Alex Leonard Starr. I think the single biggest contemporary influence on Russ was Jesse Marsh. He loved Jesse and his work. I can see it from the standpoint of design and spotting the blacks. Russ was a better technician than Jesse was, but I think Jesse was one hell of a designer. Jesse could do things that nobody else could do. A lot of people don't like his work because it doesn't have the flash of a Gil Kane or a Jack Kirby but Jesse Marsh could do things that nobody else could get away with at Western comics. His women were cuter than the dickens and he could have his women falling flat on their backs where the point of view is right up the crotch as they're sitting on the ground. There's nothing drawn that's "bad," but it's the kind of things that editors wouldn't let you do because you "don't dare do" poses, but Jesse did it so well, he could pull it off. People think it's really neat what Neal Adams did in *Dreadnaught*.



ILLUSTRATION BY BOB KUBERT

where you've got a page and you've got a whole book there made out of six or eight panels, or a mini that says "a fine Stanenko effort", and so on. There are some loose Marsh Tarzan's in '32 or '33 that if you hold them back, they're all these design shapes. The foliage was rendered in the background so that if you pull the page away from you there they are, these very pleasing shapes. Neal Adams wasn't doing anything new. To digress, I think Neal Adams is one hell of an artist, but I think he's a pretty bad storyteller. I think Neal can outdraw everybody, but I've never thought he was a good storyteller. The best storytelling he did was in one or two Thors where he was consciously imitating Kirby. I wish to hell I could draw like Neal. There isn't anything he can't draw. Anyway, Jess Marsh was a big influence on Russ Manning.

Like any working cartoonist, if he saw something good in someone else's work, and it would work better or more effectively than what he was doing, it would then become part of his style, which is, to me, the best way to use other artists as reference. I don't think that Russ ever swiped anything in his life. In fact, what Russ said is that he didn't swipe because it was harder locating the right material to swipe from than doing it from scratch.

Russ was very upset when D.C. copied reprinted his Tarzan stuff and he complained to

Barroughs, Inc., and to Joe Kubert. The upshot was that if they ever did any more reprints he would be the one that did the paste-ups for them. They stopped reprinting his pages in those Tarzan Family Albums that Kubert edited. They did such a horrible job of reprinting his stuff, in the early ones, even taking his name off it, which is really strange.

RECC: I recall hearing something at the time that Kubert didn't think much of Russ's Tarzan.

KOYER: I don't think he liked Russ's work. I'm sure that Joe Kubert feels that nobody can do work as well as he can. I liked Kubert's Tarzan visually, but I didn't like the scripts that he did. I remember Roy Thomas's comment on the very first Kubert Tarzan: "Not enough words." But what would you expect from a wordsmith? I really like Roy, but for me, Roy uses too many words. To me, what makes Tarzan great are not the plots of the 25 novels. When you had those things down to their plot outlines, they're pretty simple. What made them work was Tarzan himself, the things that he did and how he did them, his communion with nature and all that. What Kubert did when he adapted the stories was to distill them down to their outline, and it's not the story "outlines" that make the Tarzan books fun. It's how those characters work within that story framework that makes them great and that's what was missing in Kubert's Tarzan.

BILL STOUT, DAVE STEVENS and BILL ROTSLER Discuss the

RUSS MANNING YEARS

BILL STOUT

RBCC: You worked on the Tarzan newspaper strip with Russ, didn't you?

STOUT: I worked on Tarzan and I did some writing for some of the books he was editing. He was the editor of the comics for EBB, Inc. which were going to be published by EBB, Inc. I also did some sample work with him on a *Brothers Of The Spear* Sunday strip.

RBCC: How long ago was that?

STOUT: I was with him starting in 1879 up through '73, but all together the time I spent with him was about two years.

RBCC: How many Tarzan Sundays did you work on?

STOUT: I worked on both Sundays and dailies. I also worked with him on the European books doing some of the inking, but mostly the coloring. There were three that were done and two that were published. The first one, I colored about a quarter of the book. On the second one, I colored about eighty percent of the book. The first one was Tarzan In The Land That Time Forgot and the second one was Tarzan And The Pool Of Time. On the third book I was going to color the whole thing.

RBCC: There was an English language version of the first book, but there wasn't one of *The Pool Of Time*, was there?

STOUT: I never got it if there was. I've got a Dutch version and maybe a French version. They said there was going to be an English version, but I don't think it was ever published, which is too bad because it was a pretty nice book, and I think it was some of Russ's best art. The coloring was sort of a labor of love because I was making next to nothing. It was such beautiful artwork; I hated to see it colored any less perfectly than it should have been.

RBCC: Did you color that?

STOUT: When I was working with Russ, that was the first time, as far as we know, that the European coloring system was used in this country. He found out how it was done and he taught me. What we would do is have the black and white artwork shot on to acetate and then have blueines made, which basically is the art that is on the acetate but it's printed in pale blue on a white piece of paper. We'd color and paint the white piece of paper, and then when you put the acetate on top you have the four-color artwork. What that does is, when they shoot color separations, the printer doesn't have to shoot a separation for the black because we've already done that for him. He just shoots a red-yellow-blue so the colors are more vivid and you don't get what is called a "tint of black" which is a little black haze that goes over all the artwork. You get real crisp, clean blacks. And if you ask for a 60% blue underneath the black (this is getting really technical), you get a real solid, dense black.

But it was Russ who was responsible for bringing the European color system to this country.

RBCC: How often is that used here?

STOUT: I still use it. I use it for the coloring of my underground comics—the covers. But it's not used very extensively in this country.

RBCC: Did you do any work on the Star Wars strip?

STOUT: No. After I left Russ, Dave Stevens became his assistant. Dave did some beautiful work on the Tarzan strip but I don't know if he worked on the Star Wars or not.

RBCC: When you inked for Russ, did you do full inks or did you just ink backgrounds while Russ inked figures?

BYSTOUT: I started out inking the backgrounds and as my skills developed (and they were very crude skills at first) and I got more confident with the pen and brush, Ross would let me ink more. Finally, I was inking everything but the main figures. Ross always liked to ink Tazman. Once in awhile he would let me pencil some panels, hold do the layout and I'd get to pencil the panel—usually it was a long shot with backgrounds and things. Sometimes he would let me pencil the dinosaurs because he knew I liked dinosaurs. Then I would color all the Sunday strips I was working on.

REDD: Which books did you do writing for?

BYSTOUT: I wrote a full length comic book Tazman adventure where Tazman goes to Pal-ul-don. I don't recall the rest of the story, but I've still got the story—I was paid for it. I was going to draw it when Burroughs decided to fold their books. It was basically Tazman and dinosaurs.

REDD: When you worked for Ross, did you work at his studio or did you pick things up from him?

BYSTOUT: When I was inking and coloring for Ross, I would drive out to his place in Orange County. We usually worked ten, twelve hours a day or right up until we had to mail them. I never did any work at home for him. I did do a little of the coloring at home rather than at the studio since he didn't have to oversee it because he had confidence in my coloring. Whenever I was inking, I was working there. It was a good experience because I learned a lot from talking to him and watching him ink. I also learned a lot from him as a human being, dealing with his family and how he treated his kids and his wife. It was real educational to me.

REDD: In what way?

BYSTOUT: He was a wonderful family man and very patient. Much more patient than I was at the time. I learned a lot about patience from him. Roger, who was a little boy back then, would come up to him and ask him if he could do something. Ross would sit there and think and give his permission. I would ask Ross how he decided to let Roger do what Roger wanted to do. Ross said, "Well, I just thought about what it was like when I was a little boy, and if I did that and if it was okay, and what the consequences were and I did that when I was a kid, so I said it was fine."

He always had time for his kids. Whenever his kids would visit him in his studio, he would break from his work and pay full attention to the kids. He would never tell them to leave. His family

came first, but his family also recognized his need to put in long hours at the board. He made sure that the time he spent with them was special time.

Ross was also incredibly gentle and considerate with animals. He had sort of an Albert Schweitzer philosophy. When ants invaded the studio, he wouldn't kill any of the ants because he didn't feel it was his place to take the life of one of God's creatures. One time there were termites in the house and he reluctantly had to have the termites exterminated and killed. He was very depressed by the fact that he had to kill some of these animals. He tried to put that philosophy into the Tazman strip, too. You notice that in the way Tazman relates to the animals and treats the animals.



Comic strip by Burroughs, Inc.

I remember one time I painted out a series of photos in *Life* Magazine to Ross. They were incredible photos. A gazelle had been wounded by a crocodile and the crocodile was coming up to finish off the gazelle. A hippo came down, knocked aside the crocodile, very tenderly picked up the gazelle in its jaws, and carried it up on to the shore. He stayed and watched over the gazelle until it had healed and was in full health again, and wouldn't let any other animals near it. That really impressed Ross; the strange workings of the animal kingdom and of nature, and the just that sequence into a Tazman strip. He had Tazman observing this same thing.

REDD: That's interesting because, at least in the comic books when he was adapting Burroughs directly, Burroughs had a lot of Tazman fighting animals...Tazman killing animals like lions and



gorillas. Did he ever comment on that aspect of Tarzan or Burroughs?

STOUT: Well, usually there was a necessity. It was either kill the lion or Jane was going to be eaten. In the books, I don't think that Tarzan ever wantonly killed animals, except perhaps when he was young and he was testing his abilities, seeing what he could do with his rope that he had just made or what he could do with his new toy, the knife. After that, I think Burroughs always had a deep respect for animals. Russ was always commenting that Tarzan would say, "You are wrong when you say that he is behaving like an animal because animals never behave that way and actually he's behaving very much like a human."

I think Russ was the most faithful adapter of Burroughs' stories into comic book form. When the Tarzan comics started coming out with his adaptations of the novels, I was struck immediately by the fact that his Tarzan was exactly how I had pictured Tarzan in my mind when I was reading the books. I never really felt that Tarzan looked like the Pinette Tarzan because Burroughs always described Tarzan not as bulky but as sleek and slim while the Pinette Tarzan was this bulk.

RICC: Russ did a lot of writing on his strips. What kinds of things was he interested in reading?

STOUT: Science fiction. That's just about all he read. His big love was science fiction. His family always liked his Magnus stuff better than his Tarzan stuff. They all wanted him to go back to Magnus. They liked his science fiction, and that was the first work that I saw of Russ's.

RICC: Do you know what science fiction authors he was interested in?

STOUT: No. He had read all of the Burroughs books but he was more of a fan of the hardcore brand of science fiction. The more scientific works. He'd been a science fiction fan for a long time. In high school his nickname was "Moon Boy" because he read so much science fiction.

RICC: Russ did a lot of fine work, but do you happen to know what his feelings were about the fact that he never achieved the popularity of other comic artists, including that of people who just turned up out of nowhere and became more popular than he'd become in fifteen years of turning out superior work?

STOUT: I got the feeling that Russ never thought of it in that way. Russ seemed thankful for the fans he did have and took time to communicate with all the fans. He had a filing cabinet in which he had every letter that had ever been written to him filed. Each person that had written had his own file. There was my file with my correspondence to him. Every person that had ever written to him had his own separate envelope that Russ would file the letters in.

To me, at least, Russ was very popular and it never occurred to me that he was less popular than he deserved to be. I thought, perhaps, his writing was being overlooked in favor of his art. He was such a good artist that a lot of people didn't realize what a fabulous writer he was. When I would talk to people about Russ's work, I would emphasize that.

RICC: I'm sure among artists that Russ was and is very popular, but among the fans who, say like Jack Kirby or Jim Starlin or Frank Frazetta, they just never really seemed to pursue Russ Manning.

STOUT: Maybe it was because Russ was out of the public eye more than others. It was very difficult to find the Tarzan strip. I had to subscribe to a New Jersey paper to get it. And once he started doing the strip, he stopped doing comic books. I guess as far as most fans were concerned, he didn't exist because they just weren't seeing his work, except when it was poorly reprinted by D.C. that one time. The reason I say poorly is because they redrew a lot of his things and added stuff.

RICC: Didn't they do a lot of chopping and splicing?

STOUT: Yeah. They just did a horrible reprinting job. He was displeased and he had his name taken off the work. He had no control over what they were doing to his art and he didn't want people to think that that's the way he drew comics.

RICC: I've heard that in some respects Joe Kubert didn't like the work on Tarzan that Russ Manning had done!

STOUT: I've heard that, too, which is too bad. I still think Russ and Hal Foster were the best two artists who worked on Tarzan.

RECC: And yet in Russ's work, you can see the Hagarth influence in the dynamics.

STOUT: It reshapes in the action, but in the feeling and the layout and the detailing there's a lot of Foster. It was Russ who got me interested in collecting Foster's work.

He had a beautiful Hagarth page on the wall. I commented that, boy, Foster could never come close to this beautiful work that Hagarth did. Russ immediately took me aside and pulled out these incredible Sunday pages which just had me eating my words on the spot. Absolutely awesome stuff. That one huge panel of the wedding of Val and Alexia underneath the huge oak tree, in particular, is just completely blew me away.

Russ collected other stuff, too. He had an E.C. collection. He had a room cellar where he kept all his comics—built it in the side of the hill—kept them all in plastic bags, perfect atmospheric conditions.

Marvel he was a junior Jack Kirby.

STOUT: Yeah, and that was his worst stuff. It's when he became Barry Smith that he got the acclaim.



Russ had a dog that was half coyote and half collie. It was real shy. It wouldn't let anyone approach it except Russ. I think it just turned up one day. He had a combination house and ranch. It wasn't as big as a ranch but it had a huge gigantic parcel with trees and things. It was fun to drive out there. It took an hour and a half to drive there, but the last 45 minutes were great because they were all through countryside.

Bike probably mentioned that Russ was in the volunteer fire department.

RECC: He didn't mention it but I'd heard about it.

STOUT: We'd be working away trying to meet some deadline. Suddenly the alarm would go off and Russ would say, "I'm gone!" He'd just take off out the door, jump in his truck, and leave. About an hour later he'd come back and say "Take alarm." He was always dashing out the door to fight fires, and when they had that big fire, he was gone for days. He was real responsive civically and even ran for public office.

RECC: Wasn't that right after he started drawing the Star Wars stuff?

STOUT: Yeah. He probably lost because he was too honest.

RECC: Was there something specific that made him run for office?

STOUT: I talked to him a little bit about that, but it seemed to me that it was just that he was worried that they wouldn't get someone honest in the office. The people he was running against were all well-oiled thoroughly by big companies and he was really concerned about what was going to happen to his area and to the people in his area. He was very sympathetic towards the common man. He was worried about Big Business taking over and manipulating politicians.



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RECC: Were you working for Russ at all when he applied at Marvel or D.C.?

STOUT: No, I didn't know that he applied at Marvel or D.C. What week did he apply for there? Was it while he was at Gold Key?

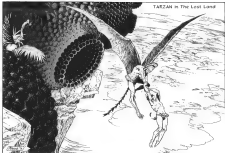
RECC: He applied at D.C. when he was still doing Magnus and D.C. said that he would have to move to New York City and start out as an inker and try out and stuff like that.

STOUT: Typical D.C. arrogance.

RECC: Then I think it was a few years later he tried out at Marvel and they said they liked his work very much and wanted him to work for them but he would have to draw in the Marvel style.

STOUT: Oh god! Well, that's typical of corporate thinking. It's a shame they can't recognize the strength that individuals have.

RECC: When Barry Smith started drawing for



FRGQ: Is there anything about Russ that you think people should know that hasn't been covered?

STROM: He was always willing to give young kids a break. I was just out of art school when I began working for him. Dave Stroms was real young when he started working for Russ.

He was so patient. I remember the first Sunday strip I worked on, a Tarzan strip. I was so nervous that my inking lines were shaky and I had to do those big long lines. After I inked them, I looked at them, and they looked okay to me and Russ didn't say anything. A few weeks later, after I sort of relaxed and settled down and was learning the fine art of inking smoothly, I went back and looked at them. I couldn't believe that Russ hadn't said anything because my lines were just so crude. I guess he just didn't want to hurt my feelings and make me more nervous.

I was real excited when we were doing the European volumes because it was a chance for Russ to do comics again. To do a different format than the Sunday pages and that was real exciting

for him. He felt it was like a breath of fresh air that didn't have to fit into the rigid format of the Sundays. He felt he had great freedom when he was doing comics. He was able to do large panels, small panels, and as much or little detail as he wanted. He was actually knocking himself out and filling the books with detail and rich plotlines and writing. It was a real exciting time to be working with him.

One time I came into the studio. I'd seen that he'd done those different versions of the cover [to *Tarzan in The Land That Time Forgot*] for the first book. He'd just rejected the first two himself. Just kidding, I said, "Boy, when can I get some original Russ Manning Tarzan art". He got up and took one of the covers that he'd done for the first book and said, "Here, have this." I almost fell over. I couldn't believe it. It was this gorgeous cover of Tarzan protecting Jane from this huge Tyrannosaurus. It's very similar to the cover which was finally used, but staged slightly differently. He was generous that way.

I also learned to love opera working with Russ

Russ was a big opera fan. When I started working for him, he asked me if there was any kind of music I didn't like. I said that I wasn't real fond of folk music or country western, so I figured that covered it, never thinking that he would be an opera fan. At the time I thought, opera, well, y'know, you know? Since I hadn't said opera, and that was a big passion with Russ, we'd listen to opera every day. Russ would explain the operas to me, what was going on. I really developed a deep appreciation for opera and started going to the opera houses in Los Angeles. I have Russ to thank for that. We had a good time listening to the local Los Angeles opera station.

Russ also made the strongest coffee in the world. If I drank more than half a cup, I couldn't talk. My hand would just be vibrating. Real potent stuff.



RICC: Do you have much original work by Russ?

STOUT: Just that one cover.

Gold Key approached Folio, at that time, about doing a "Brothers Of The Spear" Sunday strip. Russ didn't want to do it but recommended that I do it. Russ did some layouts for me and I did pencils and a few inks. I still have the pencilled layouts that he did for me. It's not original art, but I've got some of the pages from the third European Tarzan book that was never published. I've got the acetate pages.

His stuff is rare because Russ thought highly of his own work. Whenever he could, he made deals with the companies so that he could keep the



originals. In fact, that's why he did the European Tarzan volumes, because he was promised the return of all the original artwork. He wouldn't do the European volumes unless he got the originals back because he saw those pages as his family's inheritance.

Russ also introduced me to Japanese prints. As far as I know, outside of comics, that was the only art influence he had. The reason he had that was that when he was in the Navy, he went to Japan and fell in love with the Japanese prints. They're beautiful in the simplicity of the design and the flat colors. He employed a lot of the design qualities of the Japanese prints in his work.

RICC: There are things I wanted to find out about because he died right after Wally Wood and everyone wrote about Wally Wood but nobody did anything comparable to Russ Manning other than saying that Russ Manning died.

STOUT: I was really shocked by his death because I knew his family was so health-food oriented. What illness what caused the cancer?

We usually had sprouts sandwiches. Sprouts with avocado and cheese.

RICC: When I interviewed Mike Koper, he described his working relationship with Russ much differently than yours. It didn't seem as happy.

STOUT: I know Mike's feelings about his working relationship with Russ Manning, but I just had a different relationship. Mike was really surprised when he found out that Russ had given me that cover because in all the years that Mike had worked with Russ, I don't think he got any



A Star Wars daily strip which Stevens ghosted for Russ Manning in the summer of 1980.

Apparently, he really liked the drawings. On the way back down to San Diego, I stopped at his place and he gave me the first Sunday page to work on. I took it home, and did it. From that point on I worked for him for about a year or a year and a half, during '78 and '79, and a little of '77. It was a little spotty after that.

I started out doing the Sundays at home. When they started doing the European comics, Russ had me move up to Orange County and work there at his studio with him on the Sunday page, and then alternate, and then in between the Sundays we'd be working on the European books, too. We'd alternate like that so when we were constantly trying to beat the clock to get all these out at the same time.

RICC: These were for the magazines which had fifteen page stories?

STEVENS: I think that's what they worked out to.

They hired various artists to do them: just about anyone who was willing to do them, and who could do Edgar Rice Burroughs material, and do it well. They had Mike Floog, and Alan Weiss did one, Mike Kopen, Dan Spiegel. Russ did a few and oversaw it all; he was like the editor and the art director. If things didn't work out or look quite right, he'd put them back on model. Fairs and things like that, and he tried to oversee the whole thing as well as doing a few on his own.

I was like an assistant. I would ink whatever he didn't have time to ink, and some pencilling, stuff like that. Eventually he was preparing me to be put on books separate from him to do just straight inking and stuff, so that's what I eventually ended up doing.

RICC: Did you work on any of the albums?

STEVENS: No, I came along right after he did the last one, *The Pool Of Time*. I came along right after he had started or wrapped the third one, which was the one with Tark where Tark had pencilled some of it. Boy, that looked great. It's a shame they never finished it. I don't know what happened to that.

RICC: What was it like working with him?

STEVENS: I don't remember how many months I worked there in the studio. It was down 'till mid-right, practically, sometimes just to beat the clock. I would get there an average of nine in the morning or so, and we would work until I couldn't work any more. It seemed as if we were always behind schedule. It was always frantic, but it was a learning experience for me because I was completely green. I didn't know anything about shortcuts and techniques and things like that—practical inking. I did a lot of impractical things. Took way too much time and he helped me in a lot of shortcut areas and in working for reproduction rather than feathering lines that would never reproduce anyway. He was really good as a training ground for later work, not that this stuff (*The Rocketeer*) reproduces all that well because I'm not really drawing this for newspaper; it's more for better publication on better paper.

I worked straight on the Tarnes stuff until June of '79. Then I went back to San Diego for awhile, and worked, and drew stuff up or just sent it in because I think by that time he had stopped editing the European books and Mark Evans was editing them. After that, I dealt with Mark on the inking of that stuff. It's so hard to remember because all I remember was working. I don't remember dates or anything like that. I just

remember it was hard work.

RECC: Bill said that Russ played opera when he worked?

STEVENS: He played everything. The funny thing about him was he loved Rock 'n Roll, too. For a man in his fifties to be sitting there with this deep, rumbling bass voice, singing along to a Beach Boys song, was really funny. He listened to Rock, Opera and Classical. That was about it. I don't remember listening to jazz or anything like that or folk songs. He liked Rock and Pop a lot. I don't know if he listened to it as much as he did Classical, but it seemed an equal balance to me. It made it a lot easier for me to work because at that point, I was still in High School, and I always had a radio plugged into my car with blaring music. To come into a studio and expect to hear elevator music all...he listened to my kind of music and that was kind of nice. He had a lot of surprises that way. He was kind of an enigmatic guy. He didn't just sit around and drive, and he wasn't a poky old man. He wasn't that old anyway, and he was always real energetic. He was the volunteer fire chief. He wasn't your typical artist who sat there and did nothing but his work. He had other things that he did. He always had neighbors dropping in on him; they'd just come over, walk into the studio, sit down, and jaw with him while he's trying to work. They'd talk to him for an hour or two, but he never chased anybody out. He was always very gracious. To me that would be a real imposition if people just dropped in on me and expected me to visit with them when I was under a deadline. He was real unprejudiced in that way. He would always take time for people.

The volunteer fire fighting was real weird sometimes because they were real prone, since the climate out there was extremely dry, and it was a real fire hazard. They were always having fires or car crashes or something. I remember one time they had a huge fire which was just eating everything up; they had started evacuating parts of the canyon in anticipation, and Russ had already gone out on an alarm. Doris and the kids weren't at home either, and I was the only one there at the ranch. I looked up out of the window. All I could see was black and red off in the distance and I thought, "Oh no, I better get out of here!" I went out and got into my car because I'd been there for hours and hadn't heard from anybody. I went out to the main road, and it's a good thing I left when I did because there was a sheet of flame along the road. Five trucks were right there so I

just barely got out in time. Luckily they stopped it, but that was really something. He was always out fighting fires, wrapping people off the road. He had a lot of stories. I think he said one time he pulled Don Glat out of a ditch. Glat and his wife had come out to see him for something, and the way he described it is, "Well, Don isn't a real practical driver." Apparently, he had to go out with his truck and get him. The roads aren't that hazardous out there so I don't know how he ended up in a ditch.

Russ was kind of the community leader for that area.

RECC: Did you work with Russ on Star Wars for awhile?

STEVENS: No, that was...I had inked some stuff for him that he had done for some religious comics. Real neat stuff. It took place somewhere in the orient and it was an oriental missionaries type of thing with installments of six pages or so. I did some of those in '77 or '78, or whenever it was he started doing Star Wars. I had already been in animation and there was no way I could leave. I think he already had Mike Royer assisting him on Star Wars anyway. I don't remember if he asked me to help him or not.

RECC: Is a recent issue of Amazing Heroes they credited you as having worked on it.

STEVENS: Toward the end of his stint on Star Wars, it seems to me I talked to him about it or he talked to me about it. That whole Star Wars situation is real complex because Russ was gonna' quit. At the time, I had just finished working for Steven Spielberg on Raiders, and I was still in the building. They called me in and asked me to do some samples for the strip, big Sunday page size, so I was kind of in the running to see if I was going to be able to do it or not. I did two samples, and I think they ended up going with Alfredo as the person who picked it up after Russ, between him and Al Williamson. I remember doing some sample pieces and for some reason, I think it was because I was inexperienced, they weren't real sure about me because I wasn't an old-timer and hadn't been doing strips forever. It was probably wise of them not to have chosen me.

BILL ROTSLER

RECC: Tell us about Russ Manning.

ROTLER: I've probably known Russ Manning longer than most people around here. He's about three years younger than I am.

Right after the war, when I started art school

(Joy that was I mean WTF), I had known him slightly through science-fiction fandom. He'd done a few drawings in early fandom in the middle Forties. He asked me my advice on art school and at that time the art schools were pretty well divided into commercial schools such as Art Center, and fine arts schools such as Ohio. I was going to Ohio, and I said that, to me, a school oriented to fine art would be basically of more value to him than a commercial art school. In three days at Art Center, you looked at their exhibitions and it looked like two people had done the entire exhibition, and two people, mainly because that would account for any deviation from the norm. So he did indeed go to Ohio. I don't remember for how long. Over the years, of course, we have both friends—were friends for many years.

He's one of the most honest ones I ever knew. By the likes of many of my friends he was probably very square, but it was a very honest kind of straightforwardness that I really always admired very much.

Back when he was doing the Gold Key work, one day I mentioned the antics of a friend of mine at the time who was not famous and Russ said, "Gee, that's a great western name. It sounds like a name of the west." So somewhere in some comic that he did, he named a character after this friend of mine named Ben Puffer, which of course you couldn't do today without being noticed.

I received a great honor from him one time. I'd been sending out a fanzine of mine to people and Russ called me up and asked me if he could use a drawing of mine in the Tarnan he was doing because I had drawn an island that he liked very much with some winged people on it and he was doing something and he just wanted to steal it legitimately and honestly.

You can see that he is... I keep putting him in the present tense. At his funeral, or at the memorial service, I came out rather disoriented. Mike Rayer was there and he said, "Where the hell was Russ?" And I knew what he meant because it was one of those services... Well, I guess I don't know people who go in church because when I go to funerals these days, it's always the minister as the priest or whatever, saying things like, "Well, I never knew this dead person but I understand he was a good person" and all that sort of... And I always thought it was like funeral service #13-B. "Oh, he was an artist so I shall quote from, in the case of Russ, Solomon." So Mike was right. There was nothing in that service that was Russ, and the

more I thought of it the more I thought Mike Rayer was right. Russ wasn't in that service, and I felt very bad about that. Right now I'm very emotional about it as you can see.

I can't think of any particular anecdotes over the years, we just got along real well and had a nice time when we met, but Russ never lived a wild life like I've been living through the years, but I always admired him very much.

REED: Was Russ an avid reader of science fiction?

ROYSLER: I don't know. He's the one that got me into writing comics, the less that I've done. He said to me one day at a convention, "Why don't you write Tarnan?" At that time they were doing these 40-page albums in Europe, and I said, "Russ, I haven't read a Tarnan book in forty years, and I've never written comics." But he said, "That's okay. You can write it. You'll understand it." And I released him, and Shannon Dwyer, who was my lady at the time, said, "Yeah, it looks like it would be fun to do," and sort of gave me a little push in that direction and finally I called up Russ and said, okay, I'll do one of these things. So I wrote a 40-page album that was never produced because at that point, they changed over to those European magazines which had a definition that I thought was very funny, it tried to find a common denominator so that the magazines could be printed or distributed throughout Europe and remain under the legal definition of what a comic book was, and the definition they finally came down to which was the lowest common denominator that fit everything was that there shall be two stories, one of which shall not be longer than the other. Isn't that a weird definition? So Russ was my editor on a number of those until Mark Easter took over, and Russ gave me a great compliment by saying that whenever I had done a story he always reserved that story for himself, and in fact, until Mark took over, Russ did all the stories that I wrote, and these were for the European Tarnan magazines. They were going to start publishing them in America and ERS decided to get out of the comic book business.

He was a man who undertook responsibility rather than avoiding it and had a really great dedication to his craft.

Has anybody mentioned him being offered *Prince Valiant*?

REED: Not.

ROYSLER: He told me that at one point when Foster was going to stop doing it that they had

asked him to do it. And he decided not to take it because he would have to draw like Foster rather than like himself, I said, "Well, you can draw like Foster for a year or two and then gradually move it over into your type of drawing", and he didn't think that was right, that people would expect Prince Valiant to be drawn as close to the way Foster had drawn it as possible. So he refused.

In one sense, I'm responsible for getting him the *Star Wars* strip. Craig Miller was working for the Lucas film organization at the time and they were going to start the *Star Wars* comic strip and he asked my opinion, possibly among others, who would be good and I instantly said Russ Manning. But at that time, they were asking for an exclusivity, that whoever was drawing it would be drawing nothing else, and I didn't think Russ wanted to do that and so I actually never even called him at first. And they looked around for other people and then changed their minds and realized that if they're going to get somebody of top quality that it was going to have to be on their terms, and so they dropped the exclusivity part of it. So I instantly called Russ and asked if he was interested and told him who to get in contact with and so forth. So I will take a tiny portion of the

credit on that.

When he quit *Star Wars*, he was, of course, having trouble with his eyesight towards the end and that was slowing him down greatly and he decided to give it all up and he wanted to do some paintings. Western paintings. He did some—and I never saw them—that were based on Southern California history, roughly the area in which he lived—Orange County. He didn't do many because he died, but he'd always wanted to do this. The thing is, he didn't really know how to paint. He'd been doing comics for so long that he really had to learn the technique and he was in the process of learning by doing when he died.

There was a time very early in his career—in the early Sixties somewhere—when I saw a market for what is very precious now. I asked Russ if he would like to do a sexy comic and we settled on a presentation of doing a Cleopatra type thing. He did several panels. He did a Sunday page kind of thing, and he colored one, and did some separate drawings, and these weren't outfits like Pacific Comics around, and although by today's standards it wasn't sexy at all, I didn't know the right people to get it done (published) and it was kind of a different project for him to do.



RUSS MANNING—EARLY SIXTIES

Edgar Rice Burroughs

Tarzan

and the IMMORTAL GENTURION

At the gates of Carthage, a city of the lost Roman Empire, Tarzan met the immortal Genturion.

Carthage, where Tarzan met the immortal Genturion.

The immortal Genturion, a city of the lost Roman Empire, Tarzan met the immortal Genturion.



"GENTURION, ARE YOU HERE?"

"WHY ARE YOU HERE?"

"PATIENCE, GENTURION, I'VE BEEN HERE."





SURELY A WARRIOR
OF YOUR REPUTATION
WOULD NOT STRAY
FROM AWARD? I
TELL YOU
PRINCE
AUGUSTUS...
WE HAVE MADE
A GOOD FORTUNE
IN AWARDING
THIS AWARD
TO LEAD US!



THIS WHITE
ROBE IS AWARD!
BEST AS WE HAVE
OUR NAME PLACED
TO THE IMPERIAL
COURT!



I NEED TIME TO CONSIDER
YOUR REQUEST, PRINCE!

THINK OF
NO TIME!
THE HORSE
WENT UPON US
EVEN AS WE
DIED! THEY
HAVE GOTTEN
CAPTURED
AND ARE
NOW DEAD!
OH GOD!



I DO NOT
WISH TO MEET
BUT I DO NOT
WISH MY LIFE
IN A SITUATION
WHERE I AM THE
DECISION!

SHOW
ME TO MY
QUARTERS!
I SHALL
THINK ON
THIS!



WE MUST GO
AT ONCE! MY
WIFE IS THE
DEED!

I MUST
REALLY GO!







TARZAN... AND THE 'IMMORTAL' CENTURION



ARE, ROMANS? YOU CAN NOT DEFEAT TARRAN AGAIN! AND AGAIN!



THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO DEFEAT TARRAN: SLAY A WARRIOR... HUMAN TO... HUMAN!

An ancient Roman city, surviving into the 20th century had been attacked by a horde of Mongol invaders. Tarzan had been asked to lead the defending army... but his body had been taken over by the spirit of Gaius Valensianus, known today also as the Immortal Centurion. But, at the very first sight of the invaders, a huge warrior was attacking havoc amidst the Roman soldiers...



CHARGE! YOUR FATHERS OF AFRICA HAVE FIGHTED AGAIN! AND AGAIN!... DEFEAT THE CITY! AND DEFEAT THE CITY! DEFEAT THE CITY!



WHAT? YOU MAN SPEAK FOR A CITY THAT HAS ALREADY CLAIMED FOR HIS OWN!



I AM CARRIED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE IMMORTAL CENTURION!

DEFEAT ME, AND THE CITY SURRENDERS TO YOU! BUT IF I DEFEAT YOU —



FOR I SHALL NOT FATHER, ROMAN BRAGGART!







USE AGILITY
AND MUSCLE
CENTURION!

STOP
FIGHTING
ME, THURIAN!



USE YOUR QUICKNESS,
YOUR SPEED.

BE CAUSE
I CAN'T
FIGHT THE
BUTLER
OF SOUL.



THIS IS ALL ABOUT
PRIDE, AMERICALLIES!
AND OUR MAN ALONE
CAN DEFEAT A MONSTER,
LIKE THIS KRAM!

BUT CARRION IS
NOT ALONE, NOBLE
PEASANTS! THESE
FIGHT THE GREATEST
WARRIOR ON TWO
LEGS... IN THE
JOURNALS!



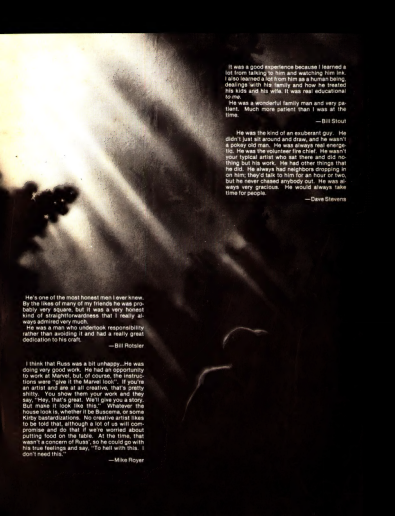




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It was a good experience because I learned a lot from talking to him and watching him ink. I also learned a lot from him as a human being, dealings with his family and how he treated his kids and his wife. It was real educational to me.

He was a wonderful family man and very patient. Much more patient than I was at the time.

—Bill Stout

He was the kind of an exuberant guy. He didn't just sit around and draw, and he wasn't a poky old man. He was always real energetic. He was the volunteer fire chief. He wasn't your typical artist who sat there and did nothing but his work. He had other things that he did. He always had neighbors dropping in on him; they'd talk to him for an hour or two, but he never chased anybody out. He was always very gracious. He would always take time for people.

—Dave Stevens

He's one of the most honest men I ever knew. By the likes of many of my friends he was probably very square, but it was a very honest kind of straightforwardness that I really always admired very much.

He was a man who undertook responsibility rather than avoiding it and had a really great dedication to his craft.

—Bill Rotsler

I think that Russ was a bit unhappy...He was doing very good work. He had an opportunity to work at Marvel, but, of course, the instructions were "give it the Marvel look". If you're an artist and are at all creative, that's pretty shitty. You show them your work and they say, "Hey, that's great. We'll give you a story. But make it look like this." Whatever the house look is, whether it be Bustems, or some Kirby bastardizations. No creative artist likes to be told that, although a lot of us will compromise and do that if we're worried about putting food on the table. At the time, that wasn't a concern of Russ', so he could go with his true feelings and say, "To hell with this. I don't need this."

—Mike Royer